CHRISTADELPHIANS

Who are they?
What do they
stand for?

The Christadelphians
Box 5, Station "A"
Vancouver, B. C.

Bible addresses are given by the Christadelphians 7:00 p.m. each Sunday, at 690 N. Slocan at Wall, Vancouver. You are cordially invited to attend.

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No, they are not "just another sect". Here is the story of their beginnings. It is the story of a vow and a search for Truth.

The Story of a Vow

Life is never sweeter, the future never more enticing, than when Death stands close to our shoulder and its icy breath is felt upon our cheek. John Thomas, M.D. (born 1805), young London physician and son of a minister, discovered this at the height of a gale in the North Atlantic. With a foundering ship beneath him and a panic-stricken mob around him, his conscience seared with lack of knowledge of God and His purpose, and a little sickened at the hypocritical death's-door repentance of his fellow-men, he groped uncertainly.

Here was death staring him in the face, and he had no Christian convictions beyond a settled faith in the existence of God. On life after death and other related problems his mind—like yours, perhaps!—was a jumble of uncertainties.

In such circumstances he acted in a way which the rest of his life showed to be characteristic of him: he made a firm vow that if God would bring him safely through this ordeal, he would make it the first call on his time and energies to find Truth, the religious Truth without which a man's life is rudderless, anchorless, castaway.

By God's providence that seemingly doomed ship was saved, with all aboard her. Within a short time John Thomas was in New York with all his life before him. In such circumstances many a man would have quietly forgotten the vow made not many hours earlier. Not so he!

The Search

But how to begin the search? The most obvious thing was to examine what others thought to be the Truth. The variegated religious scene in America offered ample scope. In quick time he investigated and rejected first one and then another of the various Christian opinions around him.

At length he found a small body of people with a creed which put in the forefront the merit of the sacrifice of Christ, his coming again at some future time to transform the world into a Kingdom of God, and the importance of baptism for believers (by being buried in water) as a means of taking on the Name of Jesus so that sins may be covered. These, he satisfied himself, were all fundamentals of Early Christianity, and into this faith he was duly baptized.

Marked out for his undoubted zeal and ability, the young doctor quickly rose to prominence in this new environment.

But there were breakers ahead. Prayerfully and earnestly, John Thomas was now studying his Bible hard. By degrees the impression formed in his mind that, whilst the principles already mentioned were sound enough, there were others commonly assumed to be true which could not and should not be taken for granted. Outstanding among these was the universally-held belief in the immortality of the human soul and in Heaven and Hell as places of reward and punishment when this life is over.

When he wrote and spoke of these ideas an unhappy storm of controversy was raised, and soon the young doctor and those sharing his new convictions found themselves thrust out and compelled against all inclination to form themselves into a separate religious communion.

Before long, circumstances required—again against inclination—that they should take a distinctive name, In this way the name "Christadelphian" was improvised. A forbidding unwieldy sort of name you say ? And may be you are right. But it has come to stay. And after all, it is as reasonable and no more obscure than Congregationalist, Presbyterian, or Methodist, for it means "Brethren in Christ" (see Colossians 1 : 2.)

Their Faith

What do Christadelphians stand for ? Here are some of the main points for your consideration.

1.—They accept the Bible as the Word of God and as the only rule of life.

2.—They believe in the Eternal God, the Father, and in Jesus Christ, his Divine Son, born of the Virgin Mary.

3.—They believe that man, created "very good", fell into sin and a state of curse.

4.—They insist that death, "the wages of sin", really is death—a state of sleep and utter unconsciousness.

5.—They rejoice in the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Christ.

6.—They proclaim unceasingly their conviction that Christ will one day return from Heaven in power and glory to rid the earth of evil and to bring in a Kingdom of righteousness and peace. They are confident that this will happen before many years are past.

7.—They maintain that the true Hope of the Christian is in a resurrection from the dead at the Second Coming—an actual refashioning by Divine power of the entire man, this time as an immortal being to live forever with Christ in a perfect world.

8.—They stress the tremendous importance of Baptism by being covered in water as an act of Christian obedience—a symbolic imitation of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Christadelphians

Christadelphians are nowhere numerous. Few of their congregations can be described as large. They are to be found scattered about most of the English-speaking countries, especially Britain, and to a much less extent in some European countries. They have no impressive buildings or financial reserves. Preachers are all laymen and unpaid. All "ecclesias" meet for a weekly celebration of the "Breaking of Bread". Other activities include Sunday Schools, public meetings for the exposition of Bible truth, classes for Bible study, and preaching campaigns by young Christadelphians on holiday. The Bible, first and last, is the flesh and blood, the bone and sinew of all Christadelphian activity. For this reason "The people of the Book", a title no longer appropriate to describe the Jews, could very aptly be assumed by the Christadelphians.

A Modern Estimate

In his book *Power*, Bertrand Russell, who has no connection with Christadelphians, has this interesting description: "Christianity was, in its earliest days, entirely unpolitical. The best representatives of this primitive tradition in our time are the Christadelphians, who believe the end of the world to be imminent, and refuse to have any part or lot in secular affairs. This attitude, however, is only possible to a small sect".

Christadelphians have made a deliberate attempt to get back to First Century Christianity. They do not claim to have succeeded entirely, but Bertrand Russell's estimate provides fair reason for believing that they have not altogether failed in their aim.

Naturally, in a generation such as this the impact of the Christadelphian appeal is not sensational, yet the thoughtful and devout, the anxious and bewildered, may well find in this faith the very thing to make life worth living.

What do *you* think? Is such a faith worth investigating further?

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